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Telling your Story to the Media: Guidelines for Victims & Survivors on Speaking to Journalists (Essential Tips)

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Telling your Story to the Media:

Guidelines for Victims & Survivors on Speaking to Journalists



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Arts & Humanities
Research Council



The Commission for
Victims & Survivors

The Essentials

Speaking out in the media can be empowering for you and helpful to others. These guidelines are designed to help make your engagement with the media work for you.

1. Think through what you want to say, and what you don't want to say. Make a few notes. Ask questions before you start so that you are clear about the sorts of questions the journalist will ask and how long the interview will be. Be sure that the newspaper or broadcaster is one you trust. Ask the journalist interviewing you if his or her organization has adopted the guidelines for journalists on interviewing victims and survivors.
2. If you don't want to be interviewed it is ok to say no. It is also fine to decline to answer questions you find intrusive, and to correct any use of language that you find offensive. However, be aware that a journalist must check all the facts before they can be published or broadcast. If there are things they need to know, tell them.
3. Make sure you get the professional contact details of the journalist and the newspaper or broadcaster they are working for before you start. Record the interview if you want to have your own record, and/or have someone with you. Ask the journalist to read back to you any parts you feel particularly sensitive about. Tell him or her how you want to be described.
4. In a live broadcast try to stay calm so that you are in full control of what you say. If someone else dominates a shared interview, don't get into a fight with them. Listeners and viewers will respect your dignity more than their bullying.
5. If there are other people who will be effected by you speaking out consider letting them know in advance if there is time.
6. Take care of yourself. Make sure someone is there for you after an interview.
7. If you are unhappy about how you are treated, make a complaint to the editor or broadcaster.

